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## **Savantage Solutions: An SBA Success Story** *From Small Business to Prime Contractor!*

Savantage Solutions' Chief Executive Officer Lisa Kazor says her, "company owes much of its success to the Small Business Administration (SBA)." Savantage Solutions, a Maryland Minority Business Enterprise and woman-owned small business headquartered in Rockville, Maryland, provides large enterprise information technology (IT) and business solutions to federal agencies, effectively competing against globally prominent corporations with multi-billion dollar annual revenues.

Lisa Kazor traces the roots of her company's success back to 2000 and her vision for the future of Savantage Solutions. She wanted to build a strong and robust company that could deliver services and solutions for large enterprise projects to the government better, faster and cheaper than the industry leaders in the market. To help make her vision a reality, Kazor asked the Small Business Administration to provide a certificate of competency that would allow the General Services Administration (GSA) to waive its \$10 million revenue requirement for Schedule 70 designation. With SBA's help, Savantage Solutions was included as a qualified vendor on GSA's Schedule 70 for Information Technology Goods, Services and Solutions, and successfully captured its first large contract with a government agency, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), to implement an enterprise core financial system.

Kazor says, "Receiving Schedule 70 qualification has been the basis for every contract that Savantage Solutions has won since then, and without the help of the SBA, Savantage Solutions would not be where it is today."

### **The Path to Success**

Lisa Kazor joined Savantage Solutions (then known as Rel-Tek Systems & Design) in 1995 as Chief Financial Officer. She acquired a majority interest in the business in 2000 and took over as CEO and President. Prior to that, Kazor worked in finance and accounting for large, private international companies, managing financial management operations for organizations with annual revenues exceeding \$500 million. As a Business Assurance Manager, Lisa Kazor worked as a financial

advisor in the high tech sector for PricewaterhouseCoopers. She earned a degree in accounting from Clarion University of Pennsylvania and is a Certified Public Accountant.

“INS took an entrepreneurial stance when they chose Savantage Solutions from all other GSA Schedule 70 vendors. They wanted a company that they could partner with in a collaborative team environment,” said Kazor. Working with INS, Savantage honed its business model of large company expertise and capabilities combined with small company focus and flexibility. “We kept our eyes focused on serving the customer and were able to provide them with creative solutions that met their exacting requirements,” she said.

Savantage Solutions leveraged the experience it gained from its first government contract with INS into a long-term relationship with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The company’s core accounting system product is now used in nearly 80% of all agencies within DHS, 35% of the department’s employees, and processes 25% of the department’s financial transactions. In federal contracting, a company’s past performance qualifications are critical for competing for new business opportunities and Savantage Solutions routinely receives rave reviews from its clients.

Kazor says, “SBA is an extremely valuable resource for small company entrepreneurs like me, who have a dream and a vision and all the energy and passion to make it come true. Sometimes we just need that extra help to get past what can seem like impossible business obstacles, and SBA was right there for us.”

Savantage Solutions’ customer-centric business philosophy also has been critical to the company’s success, because satisfied customers are often repeat customers and serve as great referrals. The firm has parlayed its presence and success in the federal market into contracts awarded by the Department of Defense, Department of the Treasury, Department of Commerce, and U.S. Congress including the House of Representatives, U.S. Capitol Police, the Library of Congress and the Federal Thrift Savings Oversight Board.

Since 2002 Savantage Solutions has continued to add new customers, identifying opportunities through a comprehensive process that includes customer referrals, partnerships and teaming arrangements (e.g. with SERCO, CGI-AMS, ASM Research, BAE Systems, and many others) and government databases such as FedBizOpps. The company’s customer base has increased by 44% over the last five years, while revenue has grown by 77% percent over the same period. Moreover, due to new offerings, Savantage Solutions’ consulting services revenue, as a percentage of overall revenue, is also growing.

### **Building on Accomplishments**

With roughly \$20 million in annual revenue and more than 100 employees serving clients in

seven states and the District of Columbia, Savantage Solutions now competes for all aspects of federal IT business in a highly competitive market dominated by billion-dollar, multinational companies. Savantage Solutions' largest advancement to date was in 2008, when it was selected as prime contractor to lead a team of fifteen companies in the implementation of a \$475 million Department of Defense contract. In addition, accounting industry leaders and federal and state agencies have recognized Savantage Solutions with a variety of awards for growth, entrepreneurship and its commitment to continuously improving management and quality in all facets of its business.

Yet Lisa Kazor draws a tremendous amount of satisfaction from what she and Savantage Solutions have accomplished outside of the federal marketplace. Exercising her passion for educating children, the company has contributed financial resources and paid employee time to outfit a 30-workstation computer laboratory at Fletcher Johnson Education Center in Washington, D.C. and two separate computer laboratories of 30 workstations each at Thurgood Marshall High School in Baltimore, Maryland. In connection with the Thurgood Marshall project, the company will partner with nearby Morgan State University and the City of Baltimore to support computer skills instruction for students and curricula development by faculty to integrate computers, the Internet and other high-tech tools across all subject areas.

### **A Prime Contractor**

Unlike most small businesses in government contracting, which usually serve as sub-contractors to large businesses, Savantage Solutions is the prime contractor on several multi-million-dollar projects. The company has evolved from a software provider to a full service information technology solutions provider by anticipating and responding to trends in the government marketplace. As an example, Savantage Solutions started a new line of business around federal budget services with the National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD), an agency within DHS. It unveiled innovative products and services that make business more efficient and effective by streamlining processes, maintaining data integrity and saving valuable time, while meeting deadlines. Savantage Solutions also is one of only five firms certified by the Financial Systems Integration Office (FSIO) of the GSA to sell core accounting systems to agencies of the federal government.

Lisa Kazor is proud of what her company has accomplished with its customer-centric philosophy and finely tuned business model. She says, "Our mission is to provide the highest quality business solutions to our customers. Our strength is our ability to adapt to the demands of our customers and the marketplace with innovative products, services and lines of business." She adds, however, "In essence, receiving Schedule 70 designation has been the basis for every contract that Savantage Solutions has won since then, and without the help of the SBA, Savantage Solutions would not be where it is today."

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